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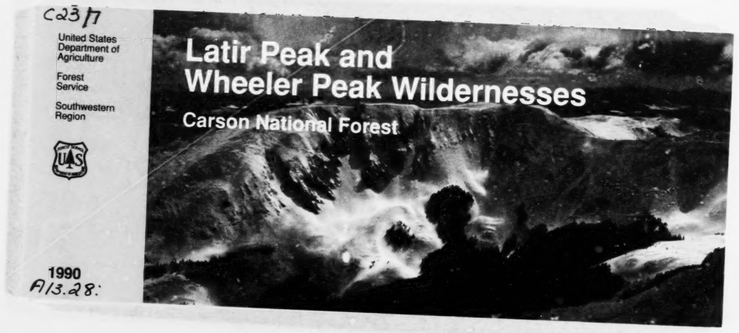

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LATIR PEAK AND WHEELER PEAK WILDERNESSES

CARSON NATIONAL FOREST

NEW MEXICO

1990

Scale 1:63,360

1 1/2 0 1 2miles

MAP LEGEND

- Forest Service Land
- Pueblo de Taos Indian Reservation
- Other Land
- Cañon del Rio Grande Wild River
- Cañon del Rio Grande Recreation Area
- National Forest Boundary
- National Forest Administrative Boundary
- Wilderness Boundary
- Wilderness Study Area Boundary
- County Boundary
- Primary Highway
- Secondary Highway
- Improved Dirt or Gravel Road
- Unimproved Dirt Road
- Trail
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- Forest Service Road
- Forest Service Trail
- Ranger District Office
- Forest Service Recreation Site
- Other Recreation Site
- Suggested Campsites
- Mine
- Locked Gate
- Fenceline
- Powerline
- Perennial Stream
- Intermittent Stream
- Spring

CONTOUR INTERVAL = 80 FEET

105°45' 105°37'30" 105°30' 105°22'30" 105°15'

36°52'30" 36°45' 36°37'30" 36°30'

SANGRE DE CRISTO MOUNTAINS

CARSON NATIONAL FOREST

LATIR PEAK WILDERNESS

WHEELER PEAK WILDERNESS

COLUMBINE-HONDO WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

PRIVATE LAND
Permit Required For Use
Inquire at Rio Costilla Coop
Livestock Associates, Costilla, NM

CARSON

QUESTA

ARROYO HONDO GRANT

VALLE VIDAL UNIT

GRANT

BEAUBIEN AND MIRANDA MAXWELL GRANT

ANTONIO MARTINEZ OR LUCERO DE GODOI GRANT

TAOS PUEBLO TRACT B GRANT

TENORIO TRACT

TAOS PUEBLO GRANT

ANTIONE LEROUX GRANT

ANTONIO MARTINEZ OR GODOI GRANT TRACT C TAOS PUEBLO GRANT

PUEBLO DE TAOS INDIAN RESERVATION
(No Public Entry)

Wheeler Peak
Highest Point in New Mexico

Cañon del Rio Grande Recreation Area

Red River State Fish Hatchery

Rio Costilla Ski Area

Red River Ski Area

Taos Ski Valley

Latir Peak

Wheeler Peak

Venado Peak

Cabresto Peak

Baldy Mountain

Ortiz Peak

Cabresto Park

Greenie Peak

La Cueva Park

Laguna Saddle

Elephant Rock

Eagle Rock

Fing Mountain

Gold Hill

Tunnel Hill

Relica Peak

Bull of the Woods Mountain

Black Mountain

Red River Pass

Sawmill Mountain

Taos Peak

Lake Fork Peak

Simpson Peak

Old Mike Peak

Red Dome

Lucero Peak

Vallecito Mountain

Jawbone Peak

Fetter Peak

Cabresto Peak

Gallina Peak

Cerro Negro

Cerrito Colorado

Cuchillo del Medio

Frazer Mountain

Scully Mountain

Iron Mountain

Comanche Point

Van Diest Peak

Costilla Pass

Bonito Park

Foster Park

Fourth of July Canyon

Copper Canyon

Poston Canyon

Bull of the Woods Pasture

Sawmill Park

Mount Walter

La Cal Basin

Lake Fork

Taos Gone

Pinabete Peak

Peñasquito

Italian Canyon

Bonita Canyon

Urraca Canyon

Jaracio Canyon

Cabresto Canyon

Ferna Ader Canyon

Culebra Canyon

Rayado

Prospect House Canyon

Blind Canyon

Garrapata Ridge

Garrapata Mesa

Lama Canyon

Alamo Canyon

Manzanita

Yerba

Cristobal

Ojitos

Cerro Chato

Cerro de Tain

Cerro Cuello

Guadalupe Mountain

Brushy Mountain

Mesa

Llano

Gravel Pit

Borrow Pit

Well

Spring

Ditch

Tailing Pond

Gaging Sta

Prospect

Mine

Campground

Radio Facility

Microwave Tower

Power line

Telephone

Oil Pipeline

Gas Pipeline

Ski Lift

Trail

Road

Boundary

Grant

Tract

Welcome . . .

To Latir Peak and Wheeler Peak Wildernesses

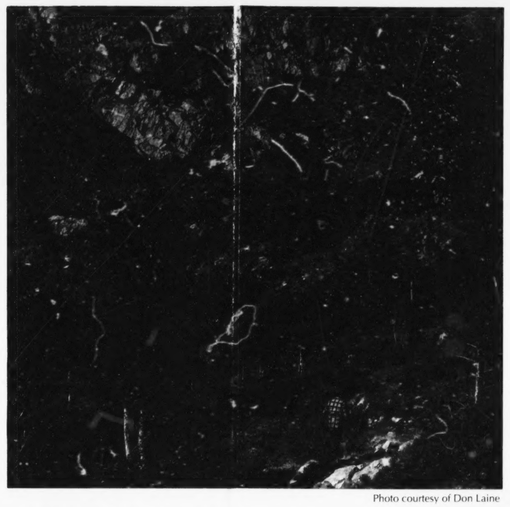


Photo courtesy of Don Laine

High Country Areas

The highest point in New Mexico, Wheeler Peak, in the north central portion of the state, towers to an elevation of 13,161 feet. As the center of a 19,150-acre wilderness named for it, Wheeler Peak shares the high country with Latir Peak and its 20,506-acre wilderness and the proposed Columbine/Hondo Wilderness of 30,500 acres. These "high country" wildernesses are home to an alpine tundra vegetative community rare to the Southwest and its many desert environments.

Growing above timberline, the alpine tundra vegetation contains plants not usually found at lower elevations. Typical examples are small purplish Indian painted cup or Indian paintbrush, nailwort, moss-pink campion, blue bells, mouse ear, alpine willows, and sedum or stonecrop. Plants seldom grow more than a foot high and usually have small but colorful flowers. The hoary marmot and the pika or cony are mammals with a preference for living in the tundra and rock slide areas.

Lower elevations are clad in Englemann spruce, corkbark fir, bristlecone pine and aspen. Mule deer, elk, bear, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, mountain lion and smaller mammals frequent these lower elevations. Blue or spruce grouse are common inhabitants and, near or above timberline, ptarmigan may occasionally be seen.

About half of the average 45 inches of annual precipitation falls as snow which remains on the ground until mid-June. The remainder of the precipitation occurs as heavy thundershowers, typically in midsummer afternoons. The wildernesses are cold at all times of year, although the summer sun can seem hot on a clear, windless day. Maximum summer temperatures are in the eighties, winter low temperatures drop to the minus 30's. Most of the areas are above timberline exposed to the full force of storms.

How To Enjoy Your Visit

Before venturing into these high country areas, take time to prepare for your trip and get acquainted with trail and trailhead locations.

Wheeler Peak

Several trails give access from the north to the Wheeler Peak Wilderness. Trails in the East and Middle Forks of the Red River lead to Lost and Horseshoe lakes and on to Wheeler Peak. Access to trailheads is on Forest Roads 58 and 58A up Red River.

From Twining Campground at Taos Ski Valley, Trail 90 ascends the Bull-of-the-Woods Fork of the Rio Hondo to the ridge on which Wheeler Peak is located, then makes the 4 to 5 mile alpine traverse southward to the summit.

South from Taos Ski Valley, Trail 62 goes up the Lake Fork of the Rio Hondo to Williams Lake following the route which is a return ski trail for Taos Ski Valley's Rubezahl run. During the winter ski season this trail on private lands is not available for other users.

Columbine-Hondo

The Columbine-Hondo area, located between New Mexico Highways 38 and 150, is a wild mountain basin with several tumbling trout streams. The mountain ridges and trails that surround the basin run from Flag Mountain past Lobo Peak to Gold Hill. Staying consistently above 11,000 feet over 13 miles, this trail system provides a rigorous backpacking experience.

Part of the Gold Hill-Lobo Peak Trail coincides with the Columbine-Twining National Recreation Trail. Designated under a National program for trails with special features, this trail runs between Columbine Campground and Twining Campground through stretches of pine, spruce, aspen, grassy meadows, and alpine tundra. Columbine Campground is southwest of Red River at an elevation of 7,900 feet. Twining Campground, adjacent to Taos Ski Valley, is 14 miles away and at an elevation of 9,300 feet. From this commanding prominence one can look into Colorado and over much of northern New Mexico, including Wheeler Peak Wilderness six or seven miles south. This is a nice overnight backpack trip.

Yerba, Manzanita, and Italianos Canyons leading up from the Rio Hondo into the Columbine-Hondo area offer additional opportunities for exploring.

Latir Peak

Access to Latir Peak Wilderness starts from Cabresto Lake Campground which can be reached via Forest Roads 134 and 134A from Questa. Road 134A is primitive and not suited to low clearance vehicles; parking is provided at the junction of 134 and 134A one mile south of the campground.

The Latir Peak Wilderness has few maintained trails; however, Trail 82 from Cabresto Lake to Heart Lake and Latir Mesa puts the visitor in close proximity to several peaks over 12,000 feet.

Consider Using Other Nearby Wild Country

Wheeler Peak Wilderness is a jewel—its many visitors attest to that. The high country to the north also offers superb recreation opportunities and more solitude because fewer visitors frequent the areas. You may wish to consider exploring other areas adjacent to Wheeler Peak.

Spread Out!

Dispersed camping is encouraged along with the "no-trace" method of wilderness use. Alternate camping areas are marked on the map and described in the text. These sites offer all the benefits of good wilderness camping and can accommodate campers without excessive crowding or damage. Please use these areas or find your own special spot.

Know and Observe Campfire Restrictions!

No fires are permitted on the shores of Lost, Horseshoe, or Williams lakes in the Wheeler Peak Wilderness. The shore areas have been closed to fire because of damage that occurs with this use.

Minimize Your Impact On Wilderness

The wilderness resource is precious, fragile and often nonrenewable. Be a considerate user of your wilderness and a pleasant neighbor to other wilderness visitors:

- Keep it clean. Bring trash bags. Carry out all trash that cannot be completely burned. Don't bury trash, animals will dig it up. Pack out trash left by others. Your good example will be contagious.
- Help yourself and other wilderness users ease the pressure on popular areas by carrying and using a portable, fueled stove rather than a campfire.
- Select an unused or little-used campsite off the "beaten path".
- If you must build a fire, use an existing campfire site if possible. Use only fallen timber for firewood. When finished with your fire, BE SURE IT'S OUT! COLD! Restore the site by breaking up the fire ring and scattering unused wood. Leave as little disturbance as possible.
- Don't pollute water sources. Wash in a container and spread waste water on the ground. Bury human waste in a shallow hole away from water sources.

Photo courtesy of Don Laine

Recognize and Respect Cultural Resources and Private Property

Taos Pueblo Indian lands border Wheeler Peak Wilderness on the south. Entrance into these lands from any direction without a written permit from the Taos Pueblo administration is prohibited.

The location of the boundary between National Forest and Pueblo land is difficult to determine. Make every effort to avoid trespass. If in doubt, turn back!

Travel Safely

Certain safety procedures should be followed by anyone going into wild country. Chances of having an accident will be greatly reduced by following safety procedures.

Do Not Go Alone

A party of at least four persons is recommended. If a person is injured, one person can remain with the victim while the others go for help. Try not to leave an injured person alone. They may wander off while in shock.

Plan a route ahead of time using U.S. Geological Survey and USDA Forest Service maps. When traveling on foot, allow about one hour for each 1,000 feet of altitude gained. At all times know where you are on the map and the best way out to civilization.

Get A Weather Report

Fast-moving frontal systems can bring sudden and violent changes in mountain weather, especially during winter. Always obtain an extended forecast before setting out.

Stay Dry And Warm

As a rule, the most serious dangers are **WIND, COLD,** and **WETNESS.** Even during July it sometimes snows on high peaks, and hard summer rains occur almost daily through the higher mountain ranges. It is quite possible to die from "exposure," technically called hypothermia, at any time of the year, especially above timberline (about 11,800 ft.). Warm clothing, even during the summer, is very important. A shirt, sweater, socks, mittens, and cap (all of wool) should always be carried. Even when wet, wool is warm against the skin. For protection against wind and wetness carry a weatherproof outer parka.

Watch for symptoms: First, tiredness and shivering warn of hypothermia about to start. Next, uncontrollable shivering, slurred speech, incoherence, poor coordination, and drowsiness.

Treatment: Get out of the wind or rain. Take shelter in a tent, or get below timberline. Give the victim warm drinks and dry clothes. A hypothermia sufferer cannot produce heat; it must be added from the outside before body temperature takes its final—and fatal—slide. Skin-to-skin contact inside a sleeping bag is the most effective treatment for hypothermia victims.

Go Properly Equipped

Always carry these items when going into the mountains: map, compass, flashlight, sun glasses, waterproof matches, whistle, pocket knife, candle, protective clothing, minimum first aid, extra food.

Allow Time For Acclimatization

People coming into the high mountains from low altitudes should beware of trying to climb any of the major peaks until they have had a few days to acclimatize. Many people who go too high too fast suffer "mountain sickness." The symptoms are vomiting, diarrhea, and the feeling of being very ill. Pulmonary edema, a major medical emergency, also can occur above the 9,000 foot level. The symptoms include extreme fatigue or collapse, shortness of breath, a racking cough, bubbling noises in the chest, and bloody sputum. Unless transported to a much lower altitude immediately the victim may die within a matter of hours. If available, administer oxygen.

Winter Mountaineering

There is a vast difference between hiking across Wheeler Peak in July and climbing it in January. Any cross-country trip during the winter months should be considered an expedition. Snowshoes or skis with skins are absolutely necessary. Any summit climb above timberline is likely to require crampons, climbing rope, ice axe, and snow goggles. Avalanches are considered a major danger in New Mexico in high peak areas. Check with USDA Forest Service Rangers or local climbers for advice on hazardous areas before setting out. Each member of a winter expedition should have at least a full 24-hour supply of extra food. Be prepared for temperatures well below zero. Readings of -40°F occur.

Leave Information With Relatives Or Friends

A complete itinerary of your trip, along with names and addresses of each member, description and license numbers of vehicles used, and expected time of return should be left with a reliable family member or friend. Once under way, stick to your planned route and schedule. Any time a group is seriously overdue call the New Mexico State Police.

Learn The Limitation of Each Member

Assess the strengths and weaknesses of each member of the party. Do not try anything beyond the ability of the weakest person. Set the pace to that of the slowest person. Never be too proud to turn back in the face of overwhelming odds. Use judgement and return another day.

Keep The Party Together

Individual members of a group should not be allowed to fall behind the main party or go ahead of it. Many mountaineering fatalities have resulted from disregarding this rule. If the group is large, select one person to set the pace, another to bring up the rear. If hiking in the dark for some reason, assign each person a number and count off periodically.

Beware of Loose Rock

In some areas loose rock can be a serious hazard. Keep your group bunched together when going up or down this type of terrain. Never roll rocks down a mountainside. Another party may be below.

Photo courtesy of Don Laine

Get Off Exposed Ridges During Storms

Summer storms move in fast and are accompanied by rain or hail, high winds, low visibility, and lightning. Do not allow your group to be caught on a peak or exposed ridge. If you are unable to get down in a lightning storm, have the group spread out about 30 feet between each person. Stay away from lone trees or rocks. Avoid shallow caves or depressions. Ground currents may jump from the edge to your body. Insulate yourself from the ground if possible (pack, rope, clothing) and squat down, allowing only your two feet to touch the ground. Do not abandon your metal equipment. It may be needed later on.

Be Prepared For Emergencies On Summit Climbs

Even the highest mountains in New Mexico are considered "walk-ups" from a technical standpoint during summer months. Nevertheless, they are above timberline, and they are remote. On long climbs or scrambles above timberline, the safe policy is to start for the summit at dawn and turn back about noon, the time when summer storms begin to form. Every summit party should take along emergency gear in case someone is injured. A plastic tube tent, sleeping bag, extra food and water, small gas stove, cook pot, and first aid kit spread among the members will insure that the victim of an accident above timberline receives the necessary care until a rescue can be carried out.

Emergency Signals

The following signals are considered standard by most search and rescue groups:

DISTRESS: 3 evenly spaced signals given within 30 seconds. Repeat as required.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: 2 signals given in quick succession.

RETURN TO CAMP: 4 evenly spaced signals given within 30 seconds. Repeat as required.

Try These Campsites (or Find Your Own)

Note: A small group is 1-5 persons. A large group is 6-15. Hiking groups of 15 or pack trains of 15 animals are the maximum size allowed in the wilderness. The location of each site is shown on the map.

1 This is a large flat area above a pleasant waterfall at about 11,400 feet. A small pristine creek flows through this area of Englemann spruce about a half-mile southwest of Williams Lake on an old prospector's or miner's trail. The area can support 4 or 5 small groups or 1 or 2 large groups and offers moderate solitude. Firewood is available, but not forage.

2 This site consists of several small flat areas set in Engelmann spruce about one-third mile south of Williams Lake. It is within easy water-carrying distance of a stream. One campsite looks out over a large meadow and is near the ruins of a 19th century mining cabin. The site can accommodate 2 or 3 small groups and a large group. Follow the old trail to area No. 1 then cut cross-country due east one-fourth mile to the edge of a big meadow. Forage and firewood are available, but limited.

3 Similar to No. 2, this area contains 3 to 4 campsites for small groups or 1 or 2 campsites for large groups. This exceptionally beautiful area gives a westward view over the big meadow toward the mountains beyond. Water is available along with firewood and some forage. The area is located on the edge of the big meadow south of site No. 2.

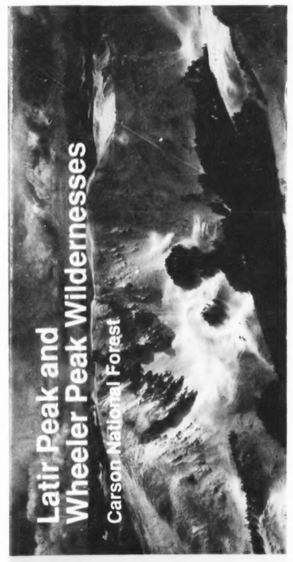
4 This campsite is situated along the old Lost Lake Trail just a quarter mile east of the new trail, a half mile north of the wilderness boundary, and about a half mile northeast of Lost Lake. It offers several flat areas among spruce trees near water and can accommodate 4 to 5 small groups and 2 to 3 large groups. The elevation is 11,200 feet and the area has abundant wood for campfires. Some forage is available in a small meadow south of the area.

5 A small basin lying midway between Horseshoe and Lost Lake is seldom used, but has 12 to 15 sites for large groups. A small stream supplies good water and Engelmann spruce provide good cover. Scenic quality is high. Easiest access is by a small saddle through bristlecone pines just north of Horseshoe Lake. The area offers an outstanding opportunity for solitude while being situated less than a mile from both Lost and Horseshoe lakes. Limited forage is available.

6 Just south of the junction of Lost Lake Trail and East Fork Trail, and just upstream from the bridge across the stream are 6 or 7 campsites for small groups and 2 to 3 campsites for large groups. The area has good water, abundant firewood but limited forage. Lost and Horseshoe lakes are less than a mile distant by trail.

7 On the east side of the stream, up a slight embankment just east of the foot bridge, are several sites in Engelmann spruce. The location is near a wet meadow and affords a fine view of Wheeler Peak. Water, wood and forage are easily accessible.

8 This is a large wooded area along the upper reaches of the Middle Fork of Red River. The area is easily reached from Bull-of-the-Woods to Wheeler Peak Trail by going downstream where the trail crosses the drainage or from a little-used trail originating at Middle Fork Lake. Firewood is plentiful and there's ample forage for riding or pack animals a short distance away. Water is available and the area should accommodate 15 or more small groups or 4 or 5 large groups.



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1990
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United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Southwestern Region

KEY MAP

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Questa Ranger District
P.O. Box 110
Questa, New Mexico 87556
(505) 586-0520
Open Yearlong, Monday through Friday, 8-4:30, and weekends, Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Carson National Forest
Supervisor's Office
Forest Service Building
P.O. Box 558-208 Cruz Alta Road
Taos, New Mexico 87571
(505) 758-6200
Open Yearlong: Monday through Friday, 8-4:30.